

opc Bulletin

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE OVERSEAS PRESS CLUB OF AMERICA, NEW YORK, NY • SEPTEMBER 1999

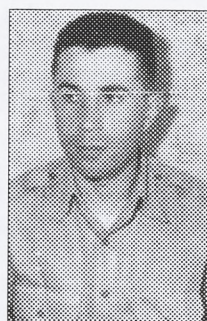
Seymour Topping's "The Peking Letter" Life and Love in China's Civil War

by Sonya K. Fry

On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China (October 1, 1949), Seymour Topping, an Associated Press reporter stationed in China from 1946-1949, has written a vivid, panoramic novel "The Peking Letter: a Novel of the Chinese Civil War" (Public Affairs). Topping, a former correspondent, foreign editor and managing editor of *The New York Times*, is currently administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes and an OPC Board member.

(Editor's Note: OPC President Roy Rowan covered the China revolution 50 years ago and has just come back from a trip to China. His story is on Page 2.)

The time frame of the Topping novel is October 1948. Communist armies are descending on Peking, threatening a destructive siege of the old imperial capital, then held by the forces of Chiang Kai-shek. Eric Jensen, a young American is in Peking doing research on ancient Taoist philosophy when he falls in love with Lilian Yang, a leftist medical student. Driven by his love for Lilian and a desire to preserve treasured Peking, Jensen agrees to become a courier for a group of intellectuals secretly negotiating with Mao Tse-tung



Seymour Topping, now and then.

for the peaceful surrender of Peking. The plot thickens with the American CIA getting in on the act. Escaping back to Peking to search for Lilian, who

has disappeared, Jensen is pursued by the CIA, Chiang Kai-shek's secret police and the Communist military.

This book is Topping's second novel. "Journey Between Two Chinas" (Harper & Row, 1972) evoked the Chinese civil war politically while this new novel puts a human face on the conflict.

The OPC and the publisher, Public Affairs, will sponsor a reception to celebrate the book's publication on Tuesday, September 21 at 6:00pm at Club Quarters, 40 West 45 Street. For reservations please call the OPC office (212) 626-9220.

Annual Meeting Notebook

Elections, Recruiting, A Round Table, An Owl, New Digs and a Sip of Cognac

by Lee Townsend

The first OPC annual meeting in our new home at Club Quarters was held on Aug. 24 and it ran the gamut from election results to how our refurbished pet owl is going to light up a room.

First the election results for Board of Governors. A total of 184 ballots were received, including 20 from members overseas. Five ballots were disqualified. Elected Active Board Members in the order of the number of votes received were: **Seymour Topping, Alexis Gelber, Richard Stolley, Robert Sullivan, Jim Laurie, Kerry Dolan and Robert Dowling**. Elected Active Alternates were, **Karen Scott, Chris Wells and David Fondiller**. Retired were Felice

Levin and Michael Serrill. Elected Associate Board Member was **Don Underwood** and Alternate Associate, **Elinor Griest**. This was an off-year vote and not all board members were up for election.

The current number of OPC members is 551 and OPC president Roy Rowan announced a recruiting drive in this our 60th year to reach a membership of 600 by the end of December. With that in mind members will be urged to bring a prospective new member or two to our free Welcome to the New Clubhouse Party September 30 at 6:00 pm at Club Quarters, 40 West 45 Street in Manhattan. It will be held in

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WE'VE MOVED: 40 West 45 Street
Phone: (212) 626-9220

A China Hand Returns 50 Years After Revolution

by Roy Rowan

As the People's Republic of China prepares for its 50th birthday party on October 1st, it's hard to visualize that country's great leap forward into the new millennium without going there.

I lived in China from 1946 to 1949, covering the civil war that carried Mao and the Communists to power. And I've returned a half-dozen times since then, not always marveling at the progress that was made. In fact, during the Hundred Flowers campaign of the 60s and the decade-long Cultural Revolution that mercifully ended with Mao's death in 1976, it appeared that China was making a great leap backwards.

The cacophonous pre-Communist Shanghai, known alternately as the "Paris of the East" and "Whore of Asia", became a dimly-lit metropolis, with only the whirring sound of torrents of passing bicycles. The once-plush Cathay Hotel facing the Bund had metamorphosed into the decrepit Peace Hotel, manned by men and women of the Hotel Revolutionary Committee dressed in black padded jackets and baggy pants. Where, I wondered, had all the British-accented concierges in their cutaways and striped pants gone?

Well, their 1999 replacements are again manning their posts. But they are now working at the pagoda-style skyscraper housing the Grand Hyatt Hotel in the brand new Shanghai of a hundred

towers (not flowers) that has sprouted across from the Bund on the Pudong side of the Huangpu River.

Shanghai's new Hyatt symbolizes for me what is going on throughout China in its race to modernize. Imagine a hotel with its lobby on the 54th floor (offices occupy the first 53), its swimming pool on the 57th floor and a circular atrium ringed by guest rooms that extends some 33 stories upward to the 87th floor.

You might wonder what would happen if the express elevator speeding up to the lobby got stuck midway. That potential problem's been dealt with. The elevators are equipped with emergency side doors so that a rescue elevator can be run up the neighboring shaft and the passengers transferred.

That kind of technological leap forward is being repeated in many other endeavors, and in all the major cities. China, incidentally, now has 40 cities with populations exceeding one million. Joint ventures with American, Japanese and European companies are evident not just in the coastal commercial centers, but in the deepest interior places as well. And despite all the sabre-rattling going on in the Formosa Strait, much of the capital for these joint ventures is coming from Taiwan.

Traveling throughout the interior (which I just did on assignment for *Fortune*), is now easy. Plenty of intercity



Helen and Roy Rowan

plane service is available, and the flights are mainly on time. The airports, however, do have "Delayed Flight Lounges" (an innovation that passengers would welcome in the U.S.) offering free meals, TV, and video games even for coach travelers.

Members of the press are eagerly received. But entering China on a journalist's visa has one drawback. The *Wei Ban*, as the Foreign Ministry is called, wants to be helpful—sometimes too helpful, planning trips and scheduling interviews that are of no particular use. Best to let the local *Wei Ban* representatives know precisely what your assignment is and what you want to do.

As one of the few remaining foreign journalists who covered China's civil war, I found myself something of a celebrity.

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OVERSEAS PRESS CLUB OF AMERICA • BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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SAVE THE DATE!
RÉMY MARTIN
"ULTIMATE TASTING"
COGNAC NIGHT

Thursday, November 4

6:30-8:30pm

Clubhouse, 40 West 45 Street

RSVP: 1-800-367-7369

**Welcome to Our
New Members**

Richard Berry

Chief Regional Editor
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active resident

Tom Fenton

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associate resident

Andrew Rosenthal

Foreign Editor
The New York Times
active resident

ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE:

George Bookman, Chair
Elinor Griest
Dwight Sargent

ANNUAL MEETING

(Continued from Page 1)

the living room and there will be food and drink. Rowan also said the OPC board has approved a plan to attract younger members by setting the annual fee for resident members at \$100 for those under 35.

After frantic weeks of renovation in our new digs and packing up in the old quarters, the OPC office is now located in the lower level of Club Quarters. OPC executive director Sonya Fry announced a dining feature in our new home that sounds like history coming full circle. The OPC was founded in 1939 by a small group of foreign correspondents sitting around the fabled roundtable at New York's Algonquin Hotel. Well, now we have our own roundtable, a large open seat table in the dining room reserved for OPC members who want to drop in and dine with each other. Of course you'll still be able to reserve your own table. And there may soon be an addition to those very serious looking portraits of chemists on the walls. OPC photos from WWI, WWII and the Korean War are being reframed and will hang somewhere in the club.

You may want to make a special note of one upcoming OPC event. Rémy Martin will sponsor a cognac tasting party Nov. 4 at the clubhouse.

Norman Schorr, co-chair of the ever-busy Freedom of the Press Committee, reported activity on so many fronts, there's not room to chronicle it all. The committee has 10 cases of abuse of press freedom under consideration in countries from Sierra Leone to Ireland. Appeals and protests have been filed since June to 11 countries from Hungary to Pakistan. And replies have

CHINA HAND

(Continued from Page 2)

In the four cities I visited—Shenyang, Taiyuan, Xuzhou and Nanjing—local newspaper reporters and TV talking heads (yes, they do have them in China, too) were eager for my thoughts on how their country has changed. And they seemed mesmerized by the old photographs I had brought with me.

Although I had come to China to do the interviewing, I found myself being besieged for interviews. There may be tensions between Beijing and Washington. But there are none out on China's hustings.

**HOUSEWARMING
BLAST**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

6:00pm-9:00PM

**At Our New Clubhouse
40 West 45 Street**

Beer, Wine, Cocktails
Heavy Hors d'oeuvres

*Bring One or Two
Prospective Members*

RSVP: 212-626-9220

been received recently from Hungary, Mexico and the Solomon Islands.

Meanwhile, Schorr reports that the Committee issued protests and appeals in behalf of three journalists who were exiled or released from prison as mentioned in the August *Bulletin*. They were Baruch Ivcher, owner of *Frecuencia Latina*, Channel 2, of Peru, who was stripped of his citizenship and sent into exile; Najam Sethi, editor of *The Friday Times* in Pakistan, released from jail but barred from leaving the country; and Grigory Pasko, reporter for the Russian Pacific Fleet newspaper *Boyevaya Vakhta* (*Battle Watch*), freed by a military court after 20 months in solitary confinement.

Now for those who give a hoot—and judging from the interest at the annual meeting we all do—here is the latest on our massive mascot from a bygone era, the *New York Herald Tribune* Owl. Once a corner piece on the old *Herald Tribune* building, the copper owl, with a five-foot wing span, was spared joining the trash heap of New York journalism by OPC members who rescued her—or him—in a pickup truck. Once there were several of the night owl guardians on the building. One now is enshrined on the International Herald Tribune building in Paris. The OPC has sent its owl to a restoration expert in Brooklyn and for a little under \$10,000 the mascot will come back good as new. The next question is where to put it in the clubhouse. For some reason many think the "Trib" relic would feel at home in the bar. Oh yes, our owl's facelift includes electric lights in its wise old eyes. Stay tuned.

PEOPLE...with Al Kaff

AUSTIN, Texas: Steve Stibbens, a *Pacific Stars & Stripes* photographer, 1962-1964, visited the LBJ Library earlier this year to meet **David Douglas Duncan**, who pioneered press use of the 35-mm. camera while covering the Korean War for *Life*. Duncan's photos were being exhibited at the presidential library. Also on display was a wall-sized photo Stibbens made in the Central Highlands during the Vietnam War. But Stibbens' work contained no credit line. He mentioned that omission to the curator, who confirmed that Stibbens took the picture and added his credit line.

BANGKOK: Heather Kelly, managing director of the production company Asia Works Television Ltd., is the new president of our reciprocal Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand. A Bangkok resident since 1991, she said her favorite assignments are in Burma—when she can get a visa to that reclusive nation.



Heather Kelly

BOGOTA, Colombia: A motorcycle gunman on Aug. 13 shot and killed **Jaime Garzón**, 39, a popular political satirist on radio, television and in magazine columns. The assailant fired five shots into Garzón's head and chest while he waited in his car at a red light near Radionet, the all-news network where he was a morning co-host. With his irreverent and zany parodies of political figures, Garzón became a household name. His television shows poked fun at Colombia's biggest corruption scandal: millions of dollars in drug money poured into the election campaign of former President Ernesto Samper. Garzón also worked to free hostages held by leftist rebels.



Jaime Garzón

CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts: *The Massachusetts Journal of the*

Streets, New England's largest-circulated homeless paper, is serializing "Tear in Time's Eye," OPC member **Rufus Goodwin's** new novel about a haphazard homeless hero. The journal also published Goodwin's poem, "Poem of the Homeless Man." Goodwin reported to the *Bulletin*: "Vendors hawk the paper for one dollar and pocket their cut. It covers everything from Earth Day, to welfare, to soup kitchens, to shelters, to needle exchange, to the Alliance for Democracy." Seeking a book publisher, Goodwin has placed his manuscript in auction.

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Virginia: During 37 years as a UPI correspondent and editor, **Leon Daniel** was based in Nashville, Knoxville, Saigon, Tokyo, Bangkok, New Delhi, Manila, Hong Kong, Brussels, London and Washington. But he had never set foot in China until July when he and his partner, **Judith Paterson**, a University of Maryland journalism professor, spent a few days in Shanghai. "It was a great trip," Daniel told the *Bulletin*. "Shanghai has many new skyscrapers, but many of them are mostly empty. Some people say it's nothing but a facade. Department stores are filled with consumer goods, but I know it's not like that in the hinterlands." In Hong Kong, **Arnold Zeitlin**, director of The Freedom Forum Asia Centre and a former AP correspondent and UPI executive in Asia, gave Leon and Judith a letter of introduction to the *Shanghai Daily*, China's newest and second English-language newspaper. "Judith spoke to the staff, and Executive Editor **Jiang Jianjun**—'call me J.J.'—hosted a lunch for us with her key editors." In Tokyo at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, Daniel and Paterson met his old UPI colleague **Pat Killen**, editor of the Club's monthly paper, *No. 1 Shimibun*, who entertained them at lunch and brunch along with ex-Unipressers **Ted Shimizu**, now freelancing, and **Rikio Imajo**, now director of AP Wide World Photos Japan. Daniel said that in Hong Kong Zeitlin "arranged a dinner at a terrific Szechuan restaurant attended by old friends including **Dan Southerland**, editorial honcho [in Washington] for Radio Free Asia."

Sadly, Daniel and Paterson brought home no pictures from their three-week trip. "Our camera malfunctioned," Daniel explained.

DELRAY BEACH, Florida: Glenn (Skip) Troelstrup, a *Pacific Stars & Stripes* staffer in Tokyo, 1952-1954, now is confined to an electric wheel chair in his home. He was diagnosed this spring with Lou Gehrig's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (*May Bulletin*). Advising people to buy long-term-care insurance, Troelstrup told *The Stars & Stripes Association News*: "Without the VA [Veterans Administration], I don't know where I'd be. The people at the VA have treated me marvelously. But they're limited by regulations and restrictions on what they can do."

DUBLIN: Brian Meehan, 34, was sentenced to life in prison July 29 after being convicted in the 1996 murder of **Vernoica Guerin**, 37, a reporter for *The Independent* of Dublin who wrote about organized crime in Ireland. Meehan, who had pleaded not guilty in June (July *Bulletin*), also was sentenced to 47 years on 14 counts of drug dealing and weapons possession. He was charged with driving the motorcycle that took the gunman to intercept Guerin's car. She was shot six times in the face and chest. The suspected gunman, identified by authorities only as Mr. A, is expected to be tried later this year.

HAMDEN, Connecticut: At a lunch this summer, Quinnipiac College awarded its sixth annual Fred Friendly First Amendment Award to **Robert McNeil** and **Jim Lehrer**, who covered international and U.S. domestic news on PBS' "McNeil-Lehrer News Hour," hosted by Lehrer after McNeil retired in 1995.

LOS ANGELES: OPC member **Kathy Eldon** is executive producer of a CNN documentary about the children's peace movement in Colombia that has been nominated for the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize. The 45-minute program, "Soldiers of Peace—A Children's Crusade," features five young people, several of whom lost



Kathy Eldon

friends and relatives, in Colombia's guerrilla war. Instead of turning to violence, they helped organize a special election in which 2.7 million children voted on the Children's Mandate for Peace and Rights, a referendum that helped shape the political future of Colombia. CNN will broadcast the documentary on its "Perspective Series" Sept. 26 and on CNNI Nov. 5. Kathy and her daughter, **Amy Eldon**, produced "Dying to Tell the Story," about their son and brother, **Dan Eldon**, 22, a Reuters photographer who was stoned to death in Somalia in 1993. The OPC and CNN premiered that film at the United Nations last autumn.

OPC member **David Horowitz** has received three more awards for his work as a consumer advocate. In July, Sertoma, an international service club, gave Horowitz its 1999 Freedom Communicator's Award for his "contributions to improving the quality of life in America and for his dedication to his fellow man and acting as a role model of excellence to youth in this country." He also received a commendation from Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan for "helping the community Fight Back! for its rights" (Fight Back! is the title of Horowitz's broadcast programs, newspaper columns and Internet site), and a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition from the U.S. House of Representatives for helping people educate themselves in the marketplace.

MINDEN, Nevada: **Bob Wicker** retired in June after 42 years with *Stars & Stripes*, first in Asia, 1957-1959, and then Europe, 1959-1999. He and his wife, Kathy, who also worked for the military newspaper, have settled in Minden.

NEW YORK: **Ward Pincus**, winner of the OPC Foundation's 1999 Stan Swinton Scholarship, in August became project manager for the launch of an Arabic-language edition of *Newsweek*. Pincus told OPC executive director **Sonya Fry**: "I will make full use of my Arabic language skills, knowledge of the Middle East and journalism background in the position." Pincus, a graduate of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, has traveled widely in North Africa and plans to use his \$2,000 scholarship money to write about Lebanon. Moving from Somerville, Massachusetts, to New York for his *Newsweek* job, he said, "I look forward to

the opportunity this gives me to attend OPC events this fall."

◆
Susan Chira, 41, deputy foreign editor of *The New York Times*, in October will become editor of "Week in Review," a Sunday *Times* section. Chira joined *The Times* in 1980 and was a correspondent and later bureau chief in Tokyo, 1984-1989. Married with two children, she wrote "A Mother's Place: Taking the Debate About Working Mothers Beyond Guilt and Blame" [New York: HarperCollins, 1998]. Chira's appointment was announced in August by **Joseph Lelyveld**, *The Times'* executive editor and its correspondent in Johannesburg, New Delhi, Hong Kong and London, 1965-1986, when he won the OPC's Cornelius P. Ryan award for best nonfiction book on foreign affairs.

◆
OPC member **Charles Sweeting** continues to publicize our club in the 70,000-circulation *Union Jack*, proclaimed in its masthead as "America's Only National British Newspaper." In his July column, "Charles Sweeting in New York," he reported: "The Overseas Press Club of America has moved to a swank new office...at 40 West 45 Street. Our new office is well situated under their [Chemists' Club] bar." He added: "Club Secretary is **Linda Fasulo**, the glamorous and witty UN rep for NBC." Sweeting also paid tribute to **Johnnie Johnson**, a 50-year member and secretary of our reciprocal London Press Club, writing that Johnson "ensured that London would have a press club" after its predecessor failed in 1986. Johnson died in February at age 84 (July *Bulletin*).

◆
Seth Lipsky is one of the few if not the only newsman to work for the three *Wall Street Journals*: in Hong Kong for *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, in Brussels for *The Wall Street Journal Europe* and in New York for the parent paper. Now editor and president of the *Forward* in New York, Lipsky's byline popped up in the September premier issue of **Tina Brown's** new magazine, *Talk*, with a review of Senator John McCain's book "Faith of My Fathers" [New York: Random House]. A couple of weeks after *Talk* hit the newsstands, Lipsky told the *Bulletin*: "Believe it or not, I haven't seen the magazine yet. I've been in Maine. Did I embarrass myself in my article?" During the Vietnam War when he was a GI combat correspondent for *Pacific Stars &*

Stripes based in Saigon, Lipsky caught a glimpse of Admiral John McCain Jr., commander of U.S. military forces in the Pacific. In *Talk*, Lipsky wrote: "[Admiral McCain's] blazing set of dress whites... brought a bit of merriment in the clutch of bystanders I was with, until someone reminded us that the admiral's son [now the senator] was being held in Hanoi by the communists as a prisoner of war. The chorus fell into silence." **Jonathan Mahler**, a *Talk* senior editor and former staffer on Lipsky's *Forward*, asked Lipsky to review the McCain book.

◆
AP celebrated its 150th anniversary last year with programs in the United States and at bureau cities around the world. In July, **Tori Smith**, director of corporate communications for the wire service, sent an e-mail to OPC Executive Director **Sonya K. Fry**: "After last year's 150th gala, I discovered just how much I enjoyed delving deep into AP's history—and wished there had been more time to do justice to it. Now, I will have that time." Smith has won a three-year, all-expense Ph.D. fellowship from the Roy Park Foundation to study in the journalism school at the University of North Carolina starting this autumn. Replacing her as director of corporate communications is **Kelly Smith Tunney**, a longtime AP executive who concurrently will continue as assistant to AP President **Lou Boccardi**.

◆
Sale is prohibited in Germany of "Mein Kampf" ("My Struggle"), the autobiography and plan Adolf Hitler wrote in the 1920s to restore greatness to Germany. In the United States, the Simon Wiesenthal Center has asked Barnes and Noble to stop shipping the book to German customers who order it over the Internet. In his newspaper column, OPC member **Andy Rooney** of CBS' "60 Minutes" commented in August: "If you have any confidence in democracy, you have to be confident that people who are free to read everything will make the right choice and reject the ideas in books like 'Mein Kampf.'"

◆
OPC member **Josephine Lyons**, an NBC writer/producer, has broadened her horizons by producing in the theater. Her latest venture is "Goodbye, My Friduchita," the story of Frida Kahlo, who suffered polio as a child, endured lifetime pain after being impaled on a
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PEOPLE

(Continued from Page 5)

metal bar in a bus accident when she was a teenager and married the muralist Diego Rivera. Calling the play "elegantly directed," *The New York Times* this summer praised its acting, costumes, lighting, set, choreography and music. In August, Lyons told the *Bulletin*: "Now plans are in the works to move the play to a larger theater and hopefully to open in Los Angeles this winter."

PARIS: Reuters promoted **Isabelle Reckeweg Clary** and transferred her from New York to her native Paris in September to manage the news service's reporters who cover French financial markets. During the past five years in the United States, she covered Federal Reserve policy for Reuters. Reckeweg started international reporting in the 1970s with UPI in Jakarta, later working for that wire service in Boston, Washington and New York, where her former husband, **Tim Clary**, is an AFP photographer.

SAN FRANCISCO: James Fallows, author, editor, press critic and OPC member, joined *The Industry Standard*, a weekly Internet business magazine, in August as a columnist. A former editor of *U.S. News & World Report*, Fallows most recently was a Microsoft consultant. In "Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy" [New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1997], he wrote: "Americans have never been truly fond of their press....[and] their disdain for the media establishment has reached new levels. Americans believe that the



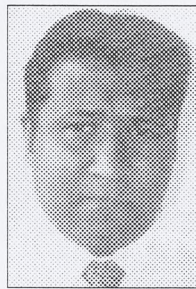
James Fallows

news media have become too arrogant, cynical, scandal-minded, and destructive."

SYDNEY: Approach of the 2000 Sydney Olympics continues to boost membership in our reciprocal Sydney-based Foreign Correspondents' Association of Australia and the South Pacific (FCA), reports **John Shaw**, an Association committee member. FCA membership in July reached 220, an increase of 70 in two years, and is expected to top 250 in 2000. OPC mem-

bers planning to visit Australia may receive information on press facilities from **Ann Oakford**, FCA's executive secretary. Her e-mail address is fca@foreigncorrespondents.com.au, and the FCA web site is www.foreigncorrespondents.com.au. Meanwhile, **Ruth Pitchford**, Reuters bureau chief, was elected FCA president in July, succeeding **Esther Blank**, German TV & Radio. In addition to Pitchford, Blank and Shaw, new board members are **Christopher Zinn**, *The Guardian*; **Jurgen Corleis**, Springer Group; **Joëlle Dietrich**, *Le Figaro*; **Sid Astbury**, DPA; **Agneta Didrikson**, *Dagens Industri*; and **Wakako Yuki**, *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

TOKYO: **Mihir Sapru** is UPI's new director of Asia operations, managing the wire service's correspondents and bureaus throughout that region. An Indian born in Singapore, Sapru was raised in Houston, Texas; attended the University of Texas; and worked for a company in Japan before joining UPI in 1998 as Asia marketing manager based in Tokyo. Sapru's promotion was announced by UPI President **Arnaud de Borchgrave** during a visit to Japan from his Washington headquarters. De Borchgrave, an OPC member, told the *Bulletin* that Asia remains a "large source of revenue for us." Japan's Kyodo News Service is one of UPI's biggest client, he said, and other Asian countries with media subscribers include South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and the Philippines.



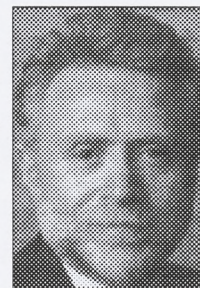
Mihir Sapru

WASHINGTON: More news from **Arnaud de Borchgrave**, president since January of financially-troubled UPI. In August, UPI sold its broadcast business to arch rival AP, a move that de Borchgrave said will help trim the company's operating losses and make the wire service a "niche" player on the Internet with Web sites dealing with nano-technology, biotechnology and national security topics. He said 47 people at UPI would be dismissed, leaving 171 employees, most of them in Washington. The sale involves UPI contracts to serve some 400 radio stations and six television stations in the United States. Sale price was not disclosed. At

its peak in the early 1970s, UPI served more than 1,200 radio clients. United Press pioneered radio news during **Karl Bickel's** presidency, 1923-1935. In those years, many newspapers believed radio stations should stick to entertainment and not become news competitors. But, seeing future revenue opportunities, UP started distributing news reports to radio stations in 1931.



Named for a German grandfather, **Wolf Blitzer** saw the world up front when he traveled with President Clinton to dozens of countries. After seven years covering the White House for CNN, Blitzer in September will become a co-anchor from Washington of CNN's new program, "World Today," along with **Joie Chen** in Atlanta and **Jim Moret** in Los Angeles.

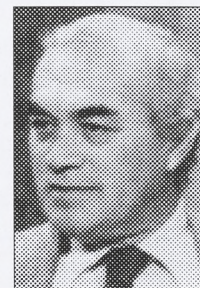


Wolf Blitzer

IN MEMORY

Martin Zama Agronsky, 84, a reporter in Israel, Europe, Asia and Washington, D.C., died July 25 in his Washington home of congestive heart failure. Agronsky began his career as a reporter for *The Palestine Post*, an English-language daily published in Jerusalem and owned by his uncle. For British and American newspapers, he covered the final days of the Spanish Civil War. In 1940, he joined NBC News as its Balkan correspondent.

During World War II, he reported on the British Army fighting the Wehrmacht in Libya, rode on Royal Air Force bombers on missions over Italy and took the last plane out of Singapore before the Japanese



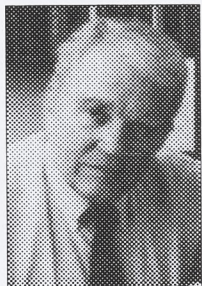
Martin Agronsky

arrived. He joined ABC News as a Washington correspondent in 1943, rejoined NBC in 1957 and worked for CBS News 1964-1968 in Washington and Paris. Agronsky helped develop one of the first news programs in which reporters talked among themselves. Titled "Agronsky & Company" and nationally syndicated from 1969-1987, his weekend news program often

NEW BOOKS

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haven't finished writing it yet." That's what OPC member **Andy Rooney**, the CBS "60 Minutes" curmudgeon, wrote in his nationally-syndicated newspaper column in August after seeing an ad for his next book, "Sincerely, Andy Rooney" [New York: Public Affairs], scheduled for publication in November. "There's a book I've read about on the Internet that I'm dying to get my hands on," Rooney commented. "It sounds expensive [\$23]



Andy Rooney

but great, and it would save me a lot of trouble if I had a copy because, as things stand now, I'm ruining my vacation trying to finish writing it." The book Rooney was rushing to finish is a collection of letters he has written during his broadcasting and writing career. He reports: "Looking through my old letters and notes, I'm surprised at what an idiot I was sometimes. Letters that make me look like an idiot won't be in the book."

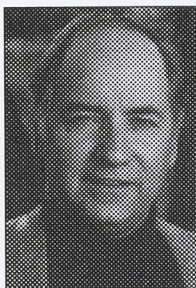
• **Don Davis**, a UPI correspondent during the Vietnam War, was on the reporting teams that covered the Apollo 10 and 11 space missions, both in 1969, but "I was too low on the totem pole to actually meet an astronaut," he recalled.

PEOPLE

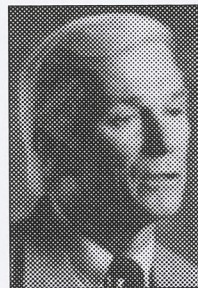
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received telephone calls from Presidents Nixon, Reagan and Carter or their news secretaries.

◆
Mel Beiser, 68, a former Reuters editor in Europe and Washington, D.C., and a pioneer in developing real-time electronic journalism, died of a cardiovascular disorder July 14 at his home in Sarasota, Florida. An OPC member from 1980-1997, Beiser was managing editor of AFX News, a London-based financial wire service, for six years until retiring in 1996. In the early 1980s, he helped develop the Nexis research service while working as an editorial consultant for Mead Data Control in New York City. Earlier, Beiser spent 14 years with Reuters, serving in London as chief news editor of economic services and editor of European services and then North American editor and deputy news editor in Reuters Washington bureau.



Don Davis



Eugene Cernan

Later after becoming a published author, Davis' agent, **Jane Dystel**, introduced him to another of her clients, **Eugene Cernan**, who walked on the moon as commander of Apollo 17 in 1972. Davis, who covered the White House during President Reagan's first term and later worked as a political writer, columnist and general assignment reporter for *The San Diego Union*, told the *Bulletin* this summer how a journalist and an astronaut became co-authors of "Astronaut Eugene Cernan and America's Race in Space: The Last Man on the Moon" [New York: St. Martin's Press]. "I liked the guy [Cernan] immediately, and he had read my novel 'Appointment With the Squire' about an FDR assassination attempt [published by] Naval Institute Press and liked the blend of history with story....Gene taught me much about spacecraft and the astro life by spending hours with me at museums, explaining rockets, suits, lunar landers and other arcane stuff....As the months passed, he learned to trust me, and I was able to crack that macho test pilot shell to get at the human being, and that's when the story took off. His ex-wife Barbara was a huge help, having saved a lot of personal documents over the years....His daughter, Tracy, explained the child's eye view of daddy going to the moon....So we got down to the hard part of putting it all on paper, and it was my turn to educate him. He was a quick and willing student. History may recall him as the man on the moon, but my favorite image of Gene Cernan will always be laying on my sofa with a fistful of chapters and my hound dog draped over his feet."

• **Greg Campbell** was news editor of Colorado's *Boulder Weekly*. A young reporter, he had never seen a war until he went to Yugoslavia and his only previous foreign experience was in the discos of Tijuana, Mexico. In "The Road to Kosovo: A Balkan Diary" [Boulder: Westview Press], Campbell writes that in Yugoslavia he met seasoned correspondents "paid pretty well for their brand of work:

the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek*, ITN, CNN, AFP, BBC, AP, Reuters and dozens more that I'd never heard of....When I mentioned my paper, no one could figure out what I was doing there, including me. 'Why would they send you here?' they'd ask." For Campbell, there were no fat expense accounts: "The small newspaper I worked for had provided me with a budget of \$1,000 for five weeks (money that had come mostly from private donations, particularly from others in the editorial department)—chump change for an assignment like this." But Campbell, now business editor of another Colorado paper, *Longmont Daily Times-Call*, was up to the challenge. "This is not a book for readers with a weak stomach," **Paul L. Wachtel**, acting director of the Colin Powell Center for Policy Studies at City College of New York, wrote in *The Washington Post*. "Campbell describes in almost unbearable detail the corpses, left in a state that leaves no ambiguity about the depravity they encountered, and the almost equally horrifying fate of many of the living as well....not only victims of rape and torture but also the innumerable carriers of the virus of hatred and nationalism."

• In "The Polyester Prince: The rise of Dhirubhai Ambani," **Hamish McDonald**, foreign editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and a former correspondent in Jakarta, Tokyo and New Delhi, describes the rise, triumphs and near disasters of one of India's most successful entrepreneurs. Reviewing the book in *The Correspondent*, journal of the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents' Club, Hong Kong newsman **Philip Bowring** says: "McDonald traces Ambani's rise from a school teacher's son in an obscure town in Gujarat to controller of a huge fiber, plastics and petrochemical empire [the Reliance Group]....He describes a series of high-profile incidents in which corruption allegations are legion and fraud and even murder charges come close to Ambani associates....He was the first to appreciate the potential of the equity market and India's millions of small savers to fund his industrial ambitions, first to use convertible debentures as a prime funding source, among the first to appreciate how to use overseas Indian investment to his own advantage. And when India opened to foreign portfolio investors, Ambani was in the lead raising money in London and New York."

New Books

• OPC member **Edward Neilan**, a veteran correspondent in Asia, believes that press freedom in Hong Kong is crumbling, and he writes about it in "The Suffocation of Hong Kong: Decline of Press Freedom Since the 1997 Handover" [Tokyo: The Tokyo Foundation]. Now a syndicated columnist based in Tokyo, Neilan contends that self-censorship and pressures on editors and reporters from management, advertisers and mainland Chinese authorities have left Hong Kong's press less free today than when Britain returned the territory to China. Speaking at a news conference in the



Edward Neilan

Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, Neilan said: "Left unchallenged, the decline of press freedom in Hong Kong will continue. Hong Kong will become just another Chinese city with just another controlled press."

The author contended that a series of firings and other staff disruptions at the daily *South China Morning Post* were examples of a controlled press. Neilan cited a letter that he received from **Nury Vittachi**, a former *Post* columnist, who wrote: "I have just resigned from the *Post* and now feel I can speak freely for the first time about the horrific things that went on there." Vittachi now is a columnist for the Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review*, a weekly news magazine owned by Dow Jones.

Press freedom concerns continued after Neilan's book was published. **Jonathan Fenby**, 56, for more than four

years the outspoken British editor of the *South China Morning Post*, left the newspaper at the end of July after management refused to renew his contract. The *Post* has been critical of Hong Kong's government,



Jonathan Fenby

and his departure "prompted a rash of speculation that he is a victim of Hong Kong's tightening political atmosphere," **Mark Landler** of *The New York Times* reported. "Although Hong Kong still has more than a dozen daily newspapers, which engage in roisterous competition, they tend to fall in line behind the government on the most critical issues, such as overturning the immigration ruling, which would have given over one million mainland Chinese the right to live here [Hong Kong]. The *Post* was almost alone in opposing that move." *Post* management gave no reason for dismissing Fenby, who earlier worked in Britain for *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and *The Observer*. **Robert Keatley**, 64, a longtime editor at *The Wall Street Journal* who joined the *Post* last year, was named to replace Fenby while the paper searches for a long-term editor. *The Times* reported: "Mr. Keatley denied that Mr. Fenby was pushed out because of political considerations. And he pledged to maintain the *Post's* editorial stance on legal issues and Hong Kong's autonomy."

• When Bishop Carlos Belo condemned Indonesia's military violence in his East Timor diocese, Catholic Church officials told him to cool it. That's the

word from **Arnold S. Kohen**, a former NBC News investigative reporter who covered Belo for four years. In "From the Place of the Dead: The Epic Struggles of Bishop Belo of East Timor" [New York: St. Martin's Press], Kohen says that when the churchman started speaking out for human rights in East Timor, "The Papal Nuncio advised him to stick to his pastoral work." The author estimates that out of a population of 700,000 more than 200,000 East Timorese died as a result of Indonesia's military assaults between 1975, when the island became an Indonesian territory under President Suharto's rule, and 1979. Kohen writes: "East Timor had become a nation of orphans and widows. Almost everyone had lost a close relative or friend. Whole villages had been wiped out. For the Timorese people, the scale of the tragedy was almost beyond comprehension." Bishop Belo issued a statement in 1988: "We disagree with this barbaric system and condemn the lying propaganda according to which human rights abuses do not exist in East Timor." Kohen quotes the churchman when he met with Pope John Paul II in 1985: "His Holiness said to me: 'I understand your position. I pray for Timor. I suffer for Timor. But, on the other hand, the Church in Indonesia also needs our attention.' " Bishop Belo was co-winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize. But he received no congratulations from President Clinton nor President Suharto, the author writes, noting that 90 percent of the weapons used by Indonesia's military were supplied by the United States.

• "It's a shock to see a book for sale with your name as the author when you

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